

# Ernesto Galarza and Mexican Children's Literature in the United States

ROBERTO M. DE ANDA

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the pioneering work of Ernesto Galarza on Mexican children's literature in Spanish in the United States. Between 1971 and 1973, he wrote twelve books almost equally divided between poetry and nonfiction for elementary school children. The author found that Galarza considered teaching Spanish-speaking children to read in their own language to be the cornerstone for improving their academic achievement and for facilitating the transition into English language instruction. Mexican culture took center stage in his poetry books, while, without being didactic, social and economic inequality was suggested in his nonfiction works. A recurrent theme throughout his work is nature and the responsibility that humans should assume when interacting with it.

Keywords: Children's literature, bilingual/bicultural education, Mexican culture, nature, social inequality.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo examina la obra pionera de Ernesto Galarza sobre literatura en español para niños mexicanos en los Estados Unidos. Entre 1971 y 1973, escribió doce libros divididos entre poesía, ciencias sociales y ciencias naturales. Entre los hallazgos principales del autor destacan los siguientes. Galarza consideraba que para niños hispano

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Roberto M. de Anda is an Associate Professor in Chicano/Latino Studies at Portland State University.

Anda, R. M. de. "Ernesto Galarza and Mexican Children's Literature in the United States". *Camino Real. Estudios de las Hispanidades Norteamericanas*. Alcalá de Henares: Instituto Franklin - UAH, 4: 7 (2012): 11-28. Print.

Recibido: 04/02/2012; 2ª versión: 04/02/2012.

parlantes la enseñanza de la lectura en su propio idioma era la piedra angular para mejorar su rendimiento académico y para facilitar la transición a la enseñanza en inglés. La cultura mexicana juega un papel central en sus libros de poesía. Mientras tanto, sin ser didáctico, en sus libros de ciencias sociales sugiere temas sobre la desigualdad social y económica. Un tema recurrente a través de toda su obra es la naturaleza y la responsabilidad que los seres humanos deben de asumir ante ella.

Palabras clave: Literatura infantil, educación bilingüe/bicultural, cultura mexicana, la naturaleza, desigualdad social.

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Although Ernesto Galarza is well-known for his memoir, *Barrio Boy* (1971a), and his study of the Bracero Program, *Merchants of Labor* (1964), little is known about his work on bilingual children's literature. Between 1971 and 1973, he wrote twelve books for elementary school children, of which all but one were written in Spanish. Up to this time, no other writer of Mexican origin had focused so intensely on writing for Spanish-speaking and bilingual children in the United States (Barrera, Liguori, and Salas 1993; Montes de Oca Ricks 2005; Reséndez 1985). The books, which he called the Colección Mini-Libros, focus on three main themes: Mexican culture, nature and society (for a complete list of titles, see Appendix). This article examines the reasons that motivated Galarza to write the mini-libros. It also looks at the role that he attributed to Mexican culture in the education of Mexican children in the United States. Also examined is the relationship between humans and nature portrayed in his work. Of particular interest is the way in which social inequality issues are suggested in the mini-libros. Galarza's pioneering work in children's literature in Spanish gains particular significance at a time when one-in-five schoolchildren in the United States is Latino (Pew Hispanic Center 2009).

## 1. THE COLECCIÓN MINI-LIBROS

Galarza had a lifelong interest in education, but he became increasingly concerned in the late 1960s in the educational issues facing Mexican and Mexican American children in the United States. As bilingual education programs were being implemented in the public schools, he learned directly from teachers in Northern California that there was a lack of curricular materials available in Spanish (Webster 1972). To help fill this need, Galarza developed a project to write books in Spanish for

elementary school children. Of the eighteen books originally planned, twelve were published in the early 1970s; the remaining books were cancelled due to financial difficulties. The books are divided into two genres: poetry and nonfiction. The poetry books were designed for lower-grade students (K – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) and the nonfiction were for upper-grade students (4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade). He called his book series the *Colección Mini-Libros*. The books range in length from 47 to 64 pages. Although he had planned to produce supplementary materials for his books, lack of financial resources prevented him from doing so (Galarza 1982). The books were published under his own imprint, Editorial Alamadén.

Up to the early 1970s, Mexicans in children's books in the United States had been mostly absent; when they were included, the image was negative and inauthentic (Reséndez; Schon). With his mini-libros, Galarza sought to provide positive images of Mexicans through an early exposure to the richness of pre-Columbian and Mexican cultures. In his poetry, for instance, he uses the strands of cultural richness in the poems to enable the teacher to guide the child to a deeper understanding of the poem. The poem itself is rhythm—music and musical words. “But beyond that,” he argued, “there is learning content that is very valuable. Properly handled and properly introduced over a period of five or six years, you'll get deeply into the culture. That was my intention in planning the books on that scale” (Galarza 1982: 127). Thus, Galarza's mini-libros went hand-in-hand with his views on bilingual education. He was a strong advocate of maintenance bilingual/bicultural programs rather than transitional programs. The goal of transitional programs is to transfer students to all English instruction as soon as they have acquired basic oral skills in English; on the other hand, maintenance bilingual/bicultural programs emphasize the use of the home language and culture as vehicles of instruction. Above all, maintenance programs seek to develop reading and writing skills in the home language which would facilitate transition to the second language (Galarza 1973a).

Galarza's initial interest in education and exposure to children's literature began shortly after arriving in New York City from California, in 1929, to begin his doctoral work in history at Columbia University. There, he and his wife, Mae Galarza, served as co-principals and later owners of the Gardner School in Jamaica, Long Island, from 1932 to 1936. The school followed the principles of progressive education, an educational approach in which Galarza had training at Teacher's College at Columbia University (Chabran; Galarza 1982).<sup>1</sup> In an interview, Mae Galarza reminisced that in their school they had “an abundance of very fine books for children. [...] We had many, just brand new books. And they were beautifully done, and done by very good people” (Galarza

1982: 118). Although the books were in English, she added, “it gets a person who knows two languages thinking. Besides, Ernesto realized what poetry meant to Spanish children and what it means to the Mexicans or any other Spanish-Speaking people” (Galarza 1982: 118). The school was open the year-round and students worked summers on farms (Chabran).<sup>2</sup> These early experiences at the Garden School would influence his selection of topics for his mini-libros, including nature, the relationship between humans and nature, and the role of labor in society.

Galarza was critical of the books that were being produced for reading instruction in the early 1970s. He lamented that writers of children’s books were more concerned with reading techniques than with content. He specifically argued that writers “don’t believe in writing things for children to have fun reading. They believe in writing things that can be used to teach people techniques. [...] But children are not interested in learning techniques. They want to have fun” (Galarza 1982: 117). Thus, with his mini-libros, Galarza wanted to avoid what he saw as a flaw in mainstream children’s literature: the books were boring. They lacked spontaneity and offered nothing relating to the interest of the child. His mini-libros, on the other hand, were completely the opposite: They reveal nature and the social world in ways that will stimulate the child’s curiosity.

It was also clear to Galarza that he would be writing for two audiences: teachers and students. Although his uppermost goal was to capture the child’s attention, he wanted to reach the teacher first. To do so, he had to keep in mind the teacher’s level of Spanish proficiency. Moreover, it was also important that the poems appealed to the teachers. Galarza wanted to make sure that the poems sparked “something that would arouse in them pleasure. [...] In a way it’s a discovery of the Spanish language for [the] teacher” (Galarza 1982: 129). If he succeeded in getting the teacher interested, then—Galarza reasoned—she would find ways to connect with the child.

He strongly believed that it was important for bilingual education teachers to learn about Mexican culture. He argued that this would help the teacher to create a common ground and bring the child closer to her. The child would realize that the teacher liked his language, what the words meant and tell interesting stories about where the words came from (Galarza 1982). For Galarza, the teacher’s knowledge of Mexican culture is fundamental for building a positive relationship with the child.

In addition to having books that were fun, Galarza wanted them to be aesthetically pleasing as well. To that end, he collaborated with illustrators for his poetry books, while his own photographs complemented the text in the nonfiction books. Indeed, he credits the success of his poetry books to the beautiful illustrations created by Vincent P. Rascón, an artist trained in the United States, Mexico and Spain (Galarza

1982; Martinez 1979). Galarza's interest in photography grew from his experiences as a labor organizer in California in the 1950s. During this time, he learned how to use photographs to document the living and working conditions of farmworkers. Above all, he had come to understand the power of photography as a catalyst for organizing farmworkers and to help build public support for their cause (Galarza 1956, 1970; Street 2007). He preferred taking his own photographs for his mini-libros because it enabled him to gain a better understanding of his subjects and their surroundings.

## 2. GALARZA: THE FATHER GOOSE OF MEXICAN CHILDREN

Before Galarza turned to writing books for children, he had spent over a decade struggling against powerful agricultural corporations in California for farmworkers' right to have union representation. London and Anderson justifiably described him as a fiery labor organizer who relentlessly sought social justice for farmworkers, despite unfavorable odds. However, another side of him—the playful poet—is seen when he picked up the struggle for bilingual education and began writing children's poetry. In his *Más poemas párvulos* (1972a), for example, Galarza humorously introduces a character called “Requetemorrocotudo”, a plump, mild-mannered gander.<sup>3</sup> Identified as an authentic Mexican, this gander is a poet who wrote and recited Mother Goose poems in Spanish (3). A rhyme about “Requetemorrocotudo” is accompanied with an illustration of the gander standing in the middle of the street in a Mexican town, dressed in a charro outfit, singing with great enthusiasm, “Yo soy de Jalcocotán” (21). Galarza was, in fact, born in 1905 in Jalcocotán, a *pueblo* in the rugged *Sierra Madre* in the state of Nayarit in Mexico's Pacific central coast. Requetemorrocotudo is therefore Galarza's alter ego; he is the Father Goose of Mexican children. This is supported by Mae Galarza's assertion that her husband relished referring to himself as the Father Goose of Mexican children.<sup>4</sup>

Galarza wrote seven poetry books, of which two were inspired mostly by Mother Goose rhymes: *Poemas párvulos* (1971b) and *Más poemas párvulos*.<sup>5</sup> Two other mini-libros, *Rimas tontas* (1971c) and *Chogorrom* (1973b), included his original nursery rhymes. Nature was the theme in the remaining poetry mini-libros: *Zoo-risa* (1971d), *Zoo Fun* (1971e) and *Poemas pe-que pe-que pe-queñitos: Very, Very Short Nature Poems* (1972b).<sup>6</sup>

When Galarza was asked in an interview about the origin of his rhymes, he replied that he simply sat down and sketched the rhymes and then wrote the words (Galarza 1982). The rhymes probably came easily to him because he had a background in music. As a young man, he had learned to play the violin (Galarza 1971a) and continued playing as an adult. He stressed that he liked keeping the rhymes simple. The

rhymes that he composed were his own creation; they were not based on Mexican oral tradition. He asserts that he was not taught any rhymes when he attended elementary school in Mexico for two years. Instead, the educational system stressed oral repetition, memorization and traditional stories (Galarza 1971a, 1982). According to Mae Galarza, her husband's initial interest in poetry probably came from his association with Mexicans during the year he spent in Mexico doing research and writing his undergraduate thesis on the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> That year, Galarza came in contact with literary people and well-read college students; he also became familiar with contemporary literature, including poetry (Galarza 1982).

Drawn directly from traditional Mother Goose rhymes, *Poemas párvulos* is a collection of Spanish poems that seek to simulate the rhythm of the poems in English. The goal is for the Spanish version to have the same rhythmic quality as the original English poem. He hoped that the teachers interested in teaching his poems would draw a parallel with English equivalents. When the English equivalent was presented to a child, the child would find it easier to recite, then read, because he or she had prior knowledge of the Spanish version (Galarza 1982). An example of his efforts to render the Mother Goose rhymes into Spanish is his version of "Little Miss Muffet." His adaptation is consistent with the rhythm in the original English, but it is not a literal translation. The idea of "Little Miss Muffet" is in the Spanish rendition, however. Consider his version of "Little Miss Muffet":

Estaba la Chole  
tomando atole  
con azúcar de pilón.  
¡zas!  
Por la ventana  
le salta una rana  
y la pobre de Chole  
con todo y atole  
llorando de susto corrió. (23)

The original "Little Miss Muffet" rhyme is:

Little Miss Muffet  
sat on a tuffet,  
eating her curds and whey;  
along came a spider,  
and sat down beside her  
and frightened Miss Muffet away. (Opie and Opie 323)

The Spanish version is uniquely Mexican. The main character, Little Miss Muffet, becomes Chole, a nickname for Soledad. The illustration accompanying the poem shows

Chole wearing a traditional dress from Tehuantepec. Instead of eating curds and whey, Chole is drinking atole, a popular drink made with cornmeal gruel and sweetened with *pilón* (brown sugar). While a spider frightened Miss Muffet, a frog frightened Chole. The rhyme flows beautifully in Spanish just as it does in English. Galarza's version works because he maintains the musicality of the original rhyme and his effective use of cultural markers. For Galarza, his poems are rhythmically English and genuinely bilingual (Galarza 1982: 131).

Another rhyme is "Gani gani ganso" (Goosey, goosey gander), which tells of a gander that wants to escape its fate to be cooked in a mole. As he does in other poems, he introduces Mexican cultural elements that would be familiar to the students, in this case, mole—a *fricassee* with a sauce consisting of chocolate, peanuts, different kinds of seeds and chiles. The illustration accompanying this rhyme shows that the cook is a woman with indigenous physical features: almond-shaped eyes, high cheek bones and a classic Mayan nose (6). Teachers used such poems to organize curricular activities much as Galarza had hoped they would. For example, a teacher reported that her students first learned the poem and then would sing it. Her students were "eager to dramatize the action in the poem and speculate what else could happen to Gani gani ganso. They studied how geese walk and talk and also combined this knowledge with drama and music."<sup>8</sup> Although uniquely Mexican in content, the rhymes in Spanish are similar to those in English. Another example is "Tiro liro liro":

Tiro liro liro  
Mexcaltitán.  
¿Quién está dormido?  
Mi hijo Juan.  
Un pie sin  
y un pie con  
calzado huarache  
Tepatitlán. (25)<sup>9</sup>

The author refers to a particular style of sandal called Tepatitlán. This is significant in that Tepatitlán is a city located in Los Altos de Jalisco, a region that has been continuously sending migrants *al norte* for more than one hundred years (Gamio 1930, 1931; Massey, Durand and Malone). In his poems, Galarza consciously includes names of places and landmarks that would be familiar to many Mexican immigrant children and their parents.

As the subtitle of *Poemas pequeños* indicates, this is a collection of nature poems in both Spanish and English. Each poem appears first in Spanish followed by the English version. But the English version is not a direct translation of the Spanish. In

each case, both poems are accompanied by the same photograph. The following poems accompany the photograph of a rose:

Las rosas tienen  
tantos olores  
como colores.

Noses are to tell  
how roses  
smell. (3)

In another poem where the subject is a pear, the Spanish poem becomes a tongue twister:

A veces se dice pero.  
A veces se dice pera.  
Pero decir pero pera  
es una gran tontera.

The poem in English, on the other hand, is about homonyms:

A pear is one  
and a pair is two.  
What a confusing  
How-dee-do. (6)

When Galarza received a proposal from the editor of a large publishing house to translate the Spanish version of the poems in *Poemas pequeñitos* into English, he emphatically refused to have his *rimas* translated. In his reply letter, he succinctly stated his thinking on the meaning of his poetry. He points out that his interest was to communicate a “certain degree of freedom from the limitations of language in expressing a possible range of subjective responses to the same stimuli.” He adds that a poem about a rose, for example, “should suggest smelling one to simulate whatever poetic responses are dormant within the smeller.” For Galarza, a poetic experience is “open-ended in the direction of the surprising, the delightful, the unpredictable, the *personal*” (emphasis in original). He stresses that the message that he wanted to send was that “poetry is for everyone in any language.”<sup>10</sup>

His poetry books introduce science topics early in the child’s education and do so with a series of beautifully written poems. In *Poemas pequeñitos*, the poems point to ways in which the natural world can be discovered through the eyes of a child. For example, the poem about a rainbow could lead to a discussion about light and colors (14); the one about earthworms could be used to describe aeration and its benefit to plants (25); and the one about a pollywog could easily stimulate a discussion about the developmental stages of animals (54). Poems from his books have been used as science



lessons, for instance, “Gani gani ganso” in *Poemas párvulos*. In a letter to Galarza, an elementary school teacher describes how she uses this poem to teach the biology of geese, including their habitat and possibly a trip to a farm.<sup>11</sup>

Galarza received many accolades for his poetry books from parents, teachers and administrators from across the country. A physician from Evanston, Illinois, was grateful that his children had learned to read Spanish using *Poemas párvulos* and *Rimas tontas*. He added that his seven-year old daughter is reading *con orgullo*, while his nine-year old daughter went on to read Rubén Darío.<sup>12</sup> María Eugenia Matute-Bianchi, classroom supervisor in the Bilingual/Multicultural Teacher Training Program at the University of California at Santa Cruz, stated that the books are being used in Spanish reading programs. They are “incorporated into effective teaching strategies directed at oral language development. [...] Children greatly enjoy the *cuentos* and laugh uproariously at the amusing play on words, rhymes, and alliteration.”<sup>13</sup> In another letter, Alice Koleszar, children’s librarian at the Latin American Library in Oakland, California, stated that she found his poems in Spanish to be the only ones “to be natural, spontaneous and humorous in their ability to capture the rhythm and poetic beauty of Spanish [...] This is in comparison to those lousy translations of Mother Goose in Spanish which are forced, phony and fail to do justice to either Spanish or English.”<sup>14</sup>

### 3. NATURE, WORK AND SOCIETY IN THE NONFICTION MINI-LIBROS

Subjects from nature were favorite topics in several of Galarza’s poetry books. This interest of his is extended to two of the five nonfiction mini-libros that he published: *Historia verdadera de una gota de miel* (1971f) and la *Historia verdadera de una botella de leche* (1972b). In these two works, Galarza focuses on the relationship between humans and nature as well as describing biological processes. The general topic for two other books is society and geography (people and places) in which social and economic inequalities in the United States and Mexico are suggested: *Aquí y allá en California* (1971g) and *Un poco de México* (1972c). The last nonfiction book, *Todo mundo lee* (1973c), has a strong message for children: reading is indispensable to meet basic needs in everyday life.

*Historia verdadera de una botella de leche* opens with the author following a group of children on a tour of a small dairy farm that was prompted by a child’s question: “De dónde viene la leche?” (3). As the tour progresses, the children learn about the different phases of milk production: what and how much cows are fed, how they are milked, and much more. Using scientific dairy management practices, the farm owner and workers offer information on the proper care of the cows. They are guided by three basic principles of successful milking, prominently displayed on a sign at the farm: skill,

kindness and a clean barn (53). The farm caretakers, for example, keep meticulous records on each cow's milk production. Accordingly, they use their skills to determine the amount of supplemental pellets that individual cows should be fed in addition to green grasses and alfalfa. The pellets contain essential nutrients such as barley, flaxseed and molasses. This formula was scientifically derived to maximize the yield of milk (37). Thus, properly feeding the cows is an important aspect of dairy cattle management because the revenue from the milk must exceed the costs of feeding, housing and keeping the cows healthy.

The humane treatment of the cattle is noted throughout the narrative. The skillful and gentle treatment of the cows is exemplified in the way in which milk is harvested. Although mechanical equipment is used to milk the cows, it is closely monitored to prevent injuring them. More precisely, the milking equipment cannot exert more than 13 pounds of pressure on the cow's teats; otherwise, the cow will be injured. However, if the pressure is less than that, then no milk will be drawn. Although the author does not elaborate on how this technique was developed, it is doubtless the result of much trial and error experimentation.

An additional aspect of running a successful dairy farm is raising calves until they mature and become productive. To illustrate this process, Galarza discusses the cycle from birth to maturity of a calf born on the farm and outlines the biological processes involved in producing milk. The process starts as the cow chews alfalfa and grasses and produces a substance called cud, which then passes through four stomachs and ends up as milk in the udder. Since the farm sells raw milk, it is quickly cooled then bottled and taken to the market. Galarza most likely chose the farm depicted in the book because of its small scale and the love that the owner and caretakers had for the cows.<sup>15</sup> It can also be argued that Galarza is being consistent with his views on nature: raw milk is more nutritious than pasteurized milk because the former has more enzymes than the latter.

While *Historia verdadera de una botella de leche* describes where milk comes from, *Historia verdadera de na gota de miel* piques children's curiosity about the source of another natural food—honey. Using his own photographs, Galarza shows the life cycle of bees and the harvesting of honey. Depicted in photographs are bees building honeycombs with hundreds of symmetrical cells on both sides. The author stresses how quickly and efficiently the bees build the honeycombs. Also described is the biological reproduction of bees. The queen bee deposits eggs in each cell, followed by worker bees that fill the cells with honey and pollen. Each cell is then sealed with wax. The eggs will turn into larva and then chrysalis from which adult bees will emerge twenty-one days later. As with the dairy cows, the author examines how humans appropriate the bees' honey in a

humane way. For instance, the beekeeper makes sure that the tools used to remove the bees from the honeycombs and thus gain access to the honey do not injure them. Similarly, the beekeeper has to be conscientious not to take all the honey as the bees will need it to survive during the winter.

In *Aquí y allá en California*, Galarza offers an introductory social studies book for the upper elementary school grades. His photographs nicely complement the text, which, in broad strokes, describes the state's early history, geography, economy and people. Well-chosen photographs depict the geographic diversity of the state: the Sierra Nevada mountain range; the deserts in the southern part of the state; the beaches along the coast. Although the author discusses the establishment of the missions and pueblos like Los Angeles and San Francisco, he leaves out the central role that Mexicans played in building California. This information most likely would have been included in the ancillary teaching materials had they been produced.

A major strength of this book is the discussion of California's agricultural industry and the working and living conditions of farmworkers. By the time this book was published, Galarza had become an expert on these topics. Facing fierce opposition from growers, he had struggled to organize farmworkers from 1947 to 1960. He then spent the following decade writing two major works about his experiences: *Merchants of Labor* (1964), a study of the Bracero Program and its impact on domestic farmworkers; and *Spiders in the House and Workers in the Fields* (1970), an analysis of the collusion between growers and the State to derail his union's efforts to organize farmworkers.<sup>16</sup> Galarza's understanding of the farmworkers' struggles sprang not only from his labor organizing activities and scholarly work, it also came from his personal experiences toiling in the fields as a child (Galarza 1971a).

Galarza's photographs and text capture the immense scale of the state's agricultural production in *Aquí y allá en California*. For example, a series of photographs show thousands of cotton bales at a shipping yard waiting to be sent to a mill (39); the cultivation of asparagus in the Stockton area (40); lettuce being picked in the Salinas Valley (41). Each photograph depicts men and women doing back-breaking work. The text explains that agricultural production of this magnitude requires large numbers of workers who work intermittently as they follow the crops. As farmworkers move from one farm to the next, they often live in temporary labor camps. The photograph accompanying this text shows two young boys in front of a row of tents that lack indoor plumbing (44).

Another photograph displays an expansive field where dozens of workers are harvesting carrots and packing them into crates. In the foreground, a boy not older than

eight years of age is shown lying on his stomach in the middle of a row, flanked by his parents tying carrots. The boy is resting his face on propped hands and looking directly into the camera. The text accompanying the photograph reads, “Mientras los padres trabajan el muchacho piensa” (42-43). This encourages the reader to speculate about what the boy could be thinking, how he feels about being there and whether he would prefer to be elsewhere. In contrast, the following several pages display photographs of white children and adults leisurely enjoying beautiful beaches. The images reveal the wide gap in the social and economic conditions between Mexicans and whites in California. It is a not so subtle commentary of the deplorable working and living conditions of farmworkers and their families. This book invites socially conscious teachers to discuss with their students the social inequalities between Mexicans and whites.

In his second social studies book, *Un poco de México*, Galarza goes a long way toward portraying the social complexity of his native country. From the outset, however, he acknowledges that it is impossible to get to know a nation and its people in forty photographs. Nonetheless, he believes that with the help of a camera one can get a glimpse here and there of an open-air market, a landscape or someone’s face (3). The first part of the book presents the history of Mexico in chronological order, beginning with the Aztecs who had come from Aztlán to establish their capital, Tenochtitlán, up to the Spanish conquest of Mexico.

An acute observer of social life, Galarza then presents through cityscapes the existence of side-by-side poverty and prosperity in modern cities. For instance, a photograph of a skyscraper that houses modern businesses is immediately followed by one of multi-storied buildings with rooftops crowded with shacks in which poor people live (14-15).<sup>17</sup> Also included is a photograph of haphazardly built shacks in a poor neighborhood in Mexicali that could well be a neighborhood in any other city along the U.S.-Mexico border. It is evident that the shacks are constructed with discarded materials obtained from the United States (Ward). The author also points out that the residents in the neighborhood come from the interior of the country looking for work (16-17). This statement draws attention to patterns of internal migration in Mexico.<sup>18</sup> Internal migration is an experience that is likely to be familiar to Mexican immigrant children and their parents, since they often move first to border cities before crossing to the United States (Bustamante).

It is also clear from the narratives that Galarza listens closely to people’s speech. Throughout his books, he uses words and phrases that represent authentic Mexican speech. For instance, his *Strangers in our Fields* (1956), which reports on his research on

braceros' working and living conditions, is replete with examples where he lets his subjects speak for themselves. An example of authentic speech in *Un poco de México* is the gentle question that merchants ask buyers in a mercado: “¿Qué lleva, marchantita?” (23). A literal translation would be: “What will you take, dear customer?” This uniquely Mexican term will help students identify with the story as they come across expressions that they are familiar with.

Galarza ends the book with two young boys deciding to go play in the Río Grande at the end of the school year. This is a fitting way to end a book about Mexico written for Mexican children in the United States. Indeed, the boys are straddling both countries. Galarza notes that, “El Río Grande es un hilo de agua. Allí son los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica. Acá son los Estados Unidos de México. En medio, nosotros. ¡Que suave!” (56).

In *Todo mundo lee*, Galarza has a simple yet powerful message: Everyone needs to learn to read to meet basic needs in life and to develop their knowledge and potential. The book contains photographs of children and adults reading different types of materials—newspapers, instruction manuals and books. They read to get information, to perform a host of jobs or simply for pleasure. The book begins with pictures of three different animals accompanied by the statement that each of them does not know how to read. The next sentence states that each of the animals wants to learn to read. Then the author poses the question whether the animal will learn (3-7). The fourth picture shows a baby girl. The accompanying text reads: “Lori todavía no sabe leer./ Quiere que alguien la enseñe./ ¿Aprenderá?” (9). When the book is read aloud by the teacher, the questions posed elicit a response from the students. The students will most likely respond that animals cannot learn to read, but that the baby girl will eventually learn. The message transmitted to children is that reading is a uniquely human activity and that they will learn to read, too.

The ancillary materials that Galarza had planned to write for his nonfiction mini-books would have most likely included background information and teaching suggestions similar to those he offers in his play, *Stegomyia, Jr.* (1936). The play highlights the scientific accomplishments of Dr. Carlos J. Finlay, a Cuban medical doctor who successfully isolated the mosquito that carried the yellow fever germ. To help teachers gain a better understanding of his scientific work, Galarza provides an extensive introduction in which he describes the experiments carried out by Dr. Finlay and the findings that made possible the eradication of yellow fever. Also offered are suggestions on ways to make the play the central theme for other curricular activities. For example, students could study the geography and climate of the countries and regions where

yellow fever had been rampant and related it to sanitation problems; the history of the Panama Canal could be of interest; the history of scientific research on tropical diseases; international cooperation in meeting common difficulties; the drawing of maps. Additionally, Galarza offers excellent suggestions to teachers on how to organize the play and provides a bibliography on yellow fever (Galarza 1936). This suggests that Galarza was influenced by progressive children's writers who wanted to emphasize how science might be employed to teach values like cooperation, democracy, and internationalism (Mickenberg). It is also documented that teachers were using books such *Una botella de leche* and *Una gota de miel* in science instruction.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Galarza's mini-libros are an important contribution to the field of bilingual/bicultural education. His writings for children reflect his concerns with improving Mexican children's educational outcomes, maintaining Mexican culture, and championing social justice, a concern undoubtedly influenced by his long career as a labor organizer and community activist.

In 1979, he received an award for his mini-libros from the Asociación Internacional de Literatura Infantil en Español in Mexico City. In his acceptance letter, Galarza modestly summarized his goals for writing the books:

En estos libritos de muy modesta pretensión literaria he querido ofrecer un estímulo a los maestros: [...] conservar un dejo de la cultura mexicana que el tiempo y las inclemencias de la migración van borrando; celebrar algunos giros de la expresión popular mexicana auténtica; y abrir los causes de afecto y cariño hacia la vida que se abren, espontáneamente, en el despertar de la niñez.<sup>20</sup>

In these small books of modest literary ambitions I have sought to give teachers encouragement [...]; to protect a bit of Mexican culture from being worn away by the onslaught of time and the hardships of immigration; to celebrate some aspects of authentic Mexican popular culture; and to unlock the pathways to a love for life that spring, spontaneously, in early childhood. (My translation)

#### APPENDIX

##### COLECCIÓN MINI-LIBROS

##### Poetry

*Poemas párvulos*, 1971b

*Rimas Tontas*, 1971c

*Zoo-risa*, 1971d

*Zoo Fun*, 1971e

*Más poemas párvulos*, 1972a

*Poemas pe-que pe-que pe-queñitos: Very, Very Short Nature Poems*, 1972b

*Chogorrom*, 1973b

### Nonfiction

*Historia verdadera de una gota de miel*, 1971f

*Aquí y allá en California*, 1971g

*Historia verdadera de una botella de leche*, 1972b

*Un poco de México*, 1972c

*Todo mundo lee*, 1973c

All the books were published by Editorial Almadén, San Jose, California.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Progressive education was heavily influenced by the philosophy of John Dewey. This pedagogical approach emphasizes that schools should serve the whole child; that it should be a laboratory and a model for the outside world. Schools should also teach about democracy and cooperation and provide children with the tools for confronting social problems (William Hayes, *Progressive Education Movement: Is It Still a Fact in Today's Schools*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Galarza's interest in the relationship between humans and nature would remain with him for the rest of his life. In 1973, for instance, he proposed the creation of an adjunct school outside the city where children could be taken one day at a time to learn about the natural environment. Letter from Esther Rausenbush to Galarza, 23 May 1973, Ernesto Galarza Papers, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University, box 64, folder 2. Subsequent citations for this archive will be listed as "Galarza Papers."

<sup>3</sup> According to Galarza, Requetemorrocotudo is a very Mexican name. The first part "requete" is a prefix that adds emphasis when it is attached to an adjective. It is a way of saying, "It's just this way." The second part is working class Spanish, which means authentic (Galarza 1982: 119-120).

<sup>4</sup> In this letter to Maria De Lourdes Baeza, Mae Galarza provides a biographical sketch of her husband for his nomination for the Nobel Prize in Literature. 7 April 1979, Galarza Papers, box 1, folder 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Poemas párvulos*, the first book in the mini-libros series, was originally published as *Rimas tontas para niños listos* (New York: Committee on Art in American Education, 1944). Galarza wrote this book of Mother Goose-inspired rhymes in Spanish in 1942 or 1943 to teach his daughter the language (Galarza 1982).

<sup>6</sup> *Zoo-risa* is written in Spanish, while *Zoo-Fun* is entirely in English. However, these books are not translations of each other; they are companion texts. Only the pictures are the same in both books. According to Galarza, "Fun can be fun in Spanish or English, or any other language, each in its own way" (Galarza 1971e: 62). Later, he makes a similar argument for having poems in Spanish and English for the same subject in his *Poemas pequeñitos*.

<sup>7</sup> Galarza's stay in Mexico yielded one more dividend: The thesis became his first publication entitled *The Roman Catholic Church as a Factor in the Political and Social History of Mexico*. Sacramento: Capital Press, 1928.

<sup>8</sup> María Ester López to Galarza, 29 October 1973, Galarza Papers, box 1, folder 4.

<sup>9</sup> The English version of "Liro liro liro" is "Diddle, diddle, dumpling":  
Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John,  
Went to bed with his trousers on;  
One shoe off, and one shoe on;  
Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John. (*The Bedtime Book of 365 Nursery Rhymes*. New York: The Hamlyn Publishing Book, 1972: 200)

<sup>10</sup> Galarza to Marianne Rafter of Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1 May 1979, Galarza Papers, box 1, folder 4.

<sup>11</sup> María Ester López to Galarza, 29 October 1973, Galarza Papers, box 1, folder 4.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Jorge Prieto to Galarza, 9 April 1972, Galarza Papers, box 1, folder 1.

<sup>13</sup> María Eugenia Matute-Bianchi to Galarza, 9 May 1979, Galarza Papers, box 1, folder 1.

<sup>14</sup> Alice Koleszar to Galarza, 18 October 1973, Galarza Papers, box 1, folder 1.

<sup>15</sup> The Claravale Guernsey Farm was located in Los Gatos, California. It remained under the ownership of Kenneth Peake until his death in the late 1990s. Web, June 2011.

<sup>16</sup> The Bracero Program was based on an agreement between the United States and Mexico whereby the latter provided temporary contract workers to the former in agriculture from 1942 to 1964.

<sup>17</sup> In Mexican cities, the living quarters of servants (cooks, maids, nannies) are often found on the rooftops of buildings where their well-to-do employers reside.

<sup>18</sup> Internal migration refers to the movement of persons within the borders of a given country. In Mexico, internal migration has been prevalent since the turn of the twentieth century, when landless peasants began migrating from rural areas to cities, including border cities (Bustamante 1990).

<sup>19</sup> Frances Rosenberg, librarian at McKinley Elementary School, to Galarza, 28 September 1973, Galarza Papers, box 1, folder 4.

<sup>20</sup> Galarza to Timothy Beard, 20 July 1979, Galarza Papers, box 1, folder 4.

### **Acknowledgements:**

I would like to thank Hilda Muñoz for her insights about children's literature, particularly for helping me gain a better understanding of Galarza's poetry.